THE WAR OF ENGLISH EMANCIPATION

The British Paradoxist Ties a New String of Paradoxes About the Neck of His Country --England, He Says, Must Escape From the Present Empire of Apes--The War Will Break the False English Mirror of Flattery and Fear.

By Gilbert K. Chesterton.

I SUGGESTED that this was a universal war of liberation, and to show there was no malice I began by considering it as a war of German liberation. But this is the worst of all times for any nation to ignore its own sins, negligences and ignorances, and I wish to point out here in what way the war may release the English from many institutions and impositions that have made them less happy at home and less respected abroad than they should have been.

The modern German Empire is artificial, because it is imitative. As I have already said, in the eighteenth century it copied France—or rather the French monarchy. Similarly, in the nineteenth century it copied England—or rather the British Empire. Its naval and colonial ambitions of late were in no way native to that great inland country with its noble inland river. In spite of the song about the Rhine, it was not upon that or anything like it that the Prussian lords and their servants kept the most vigilant eye. Fast stands and true the watch on Folkestone, Hayling Island and probably Hammersmith Broadway, but Germans had been watching to copy us long before they watched to destroy us. I am not saying they were not wise for practical reasons in aiming at a large fleet and a string of colonies, though there is much more to be said against this pattern of policy (made in England) than the shallower imperialism of Prussia seems to have realized. But here I only speak of instinctive ease and naturalness in the products of the people, of whether they draw from the populace and smack of the soil. And in this sense it is obvious that a navy for Germany is about as natural as a harbor for Rutland.

Nor is it clear that the idea of colonies comes natural to German instincts, however much it may to German ambitions. Of course, the Prussians dismiss the doubt, as they dismiss all others, by simply saying that they are the best colonists in the world, and that it is a shame that they have never had any colonies. Similarly, they say they are the best soldiers in the world, though so simple an operation as marking on a map the number of great cities the French have taken and comparing it with its Prussian parallel will show that the Prussians' claim largely begins and ends with the fact that they once took Paris, and do not seem able to do it twice. Similarly the catalogue of English colonies is an objective fact, not a subjective theory; they are copying what we have done, even if they think, for some mystical reason, that they could do it better. The enthusiasm for colonies in Germany is largely an official campaign, but it is a very strenuous one. I have sometimes fancied that the German habit of describing tea, coffee, sugar, etc., as "Colonial goods" may have been meant to bring the political term into prominence; there would be something decidedly Prussian in imputing a semi-official dignity derived from the great world markets to what we are in the habit of regarding as a grocer.

However this may be, there can be no doubt that the new naval and colonial adventure of the Germans has been largely due to their taking the British Empire much more seriously than the British do. It is typical that the German Emperor is said to be a great admirer of Mr. Kipling. It is typical, because it exactly marks a certain Prussian power of knowing what is good, but not what is best. The Emperor, especially, I believe to be quite unlike the mustachioed Mephistopheles of the pictures, and quite undeserving of the dignity of a diabolical Richelieu or Napoleon. I guess from all the accounts that he is simply a man who has a taste, yes, and a talent, for the second rate, the kind of a man who makes weak jokes and says "Hey!" Now British imperialism of the great Kipling period was a second rate thing, and it was a thing the Emperor could understand. The notion of having, not a gallant or adventurous fleet like the Spaniards or Elizabethans, but an invincible fleet, like the British Empire, became more and more the vision. It is a pity that the German Emperor give up his English admiral's uniform, for it was the pattern from which he cut out all his other coats.

Now it is common human experience that imitations of that sort react on the thing imitated. If I find (as is unlikely) that the whole fashionable world in my town admires and imitates my hat, it is not impossible that I may come to pay more attention to my hat than to my head. And when the Germans went in, not for envying English superiorities, but for envying English inferiorities, it had a very bad effect upon England itself. Kipling was more important than Keats. A man is said to have asked "What are Keats?" but no one in those days asked "Who are Kipling?" Men knew all about the English colonies, but nothing about the English counties. It was the fashion to glorify the British navy, because it was large; but rather to sneer at the British army (which has appeared once or twice in history), because it was small. The Kaiser's strange and feminine outbreak about French's ridiculous little army is not without parallels among many of the old jingo journalists of England, who could not see that a small specialist army has advantages as well as disadvantages. Had these imperialists known any history they would have known that the practice of lending good professional troops to our Allies on the Continent had succeeded many times before the successful retreat from Mons or the successful charge across the Marne. In strict history there is much more scholarship and accuracy in the music hall song which said

"Our army may be little
But they've learnt before to-day
That a little British army
Goes a damned long way."

than there was in mere blind demands for the instant drilling of destitute millions, who were to be taught the duties of soldiers without having been allowed the rights of citizens or even the common rations of men.

But it is of the nature of imperialism that it hates history. If the Germans prevail, of course there will never be any history any more. There will only be one enormous fable eating up all the facts. When, for instance, one of the accepted and admired historians of a nation can talk seriously about "the perfect religious tolerance of the Goths" then that nation is an uneducated nation, though it had a thousand universities. One might as well talk of the equal respect paid by the Bengal tiger to Moslems and Hindus when they came into Bengal. But if we decide on conscription as an ultimate solution we must do it in the light of memory and confession; we must realize the glories we have gained through a few poor Englishmen abroad, and also the infamies we have inflicted on the great mass of Englishmen at home.

There are many other ways in which this war may be the deliverance of this country from its peculiar maladies. Merely because it is a war, it must eventually year down that weak and depraved patience which we call a respect of persons. Sooner or later it will be found that some really big blunder was made by the nephew of a Cabinet Minister; that some solidly calamitous betrayal was made by the brother of a millionaire. Sooner or later the English will realize that such nephews must be sacked, that such brothers must be shot. Again, it will make impossible forever the sort of social reform that has been borrowed from Germany; and which rests entirely on a notion of rapid organization which comes with the Prussians and which is utterly alien to the English. But after 1870 it was vaguely felt that as the Prussian soldiers could kill people so quickly, the Prussian doctors must be able to cure them as quickly. In the insurance act we applied the Prussian principle to a people to whom it is repugnant, and the broad result has been that the doctors, driven by deadly haste, killed much quicker than they cured. There has been a great deal of bombastic nonsense talked in modern works on meaner wars, about the spread of British justice and British order. The really patriotic Englishman will not pretend for a moment to be superior to the other great nations in these things. But though the triumph of English law has often been unreal, the defence and defeat of English freedom have been very real indeed. The insurance act was the real Prussian invasion of England; very probably the only one that will ever happen. There are really many men of the best class and culture of England who would be tramps, or trespassers, or (if it comes to that) burglars rather than insured persons. We have broken the great trinity of political truth, but we really have kept a third of it. We have loved liberty, though scarcely equality and fraternity.

But the greatest benefit of this great battle will remain what I have said. It will break for the English this false mirror of flattery and fear. It will destroy the magnetism of this second-hand British Empire, in which we behold all that is bad about us: as if a man looked into a mirror and saw a monkey. This war is not, as is exaggeratively said, the last war. But it is the last mechanical conscript war. It is the last war based on this machinery of monkeyish imitation, by which all men must fight and think and live and learn in the same way. It is necessary for Europe, it is above all necessary for England, that she should escape from this empire of apes. The "old country" must and will re-emerge. English people sometimes smile at the interest of the cultivated American in ivy or old oak as a sort of solid solitude, such as is praised in many tales of Henry James. But the American is right, immeasurably more right than the foolish Germans or Englishmen who, until lately, were always visiting each other's town halls and tramway lines—which are much the same in all countries. Whereas there are real English things that have been forgotten by everybody, especially the English.

The Prussians, having failed to capture the ring of the forts of Paris, seem to be proceeding industriously and successfully with their attack on the ring of the cathedrals. If they wish to awaken our people as they have awakened the other, they should drop shells on the old inns of South England as they have dropped them on the old churches of North France. . . . There is one thing I nearly forgot. We may rescue Shakespeare. He has been captured by the Germans; arrested for a philosopher, or some such low fellow. But through wall within wall of a labyrinthine fortress of libraries I can hear him laughing still.

"As if a man looked into a mirror and saw a monkey."

WILL AMERICA CO-OPERATE WITH CHINA?

The First Chinese Woman Physician Comes to Tell the United States What It Does Not Know About China—For Japan, She Asserts, Has Lied to America About Her Country.

There Is No More Duelling Among Individuals, So Why Should There Still Be Fighting Between Nations, Yamei Kin Wishes to Know as She Pleads for Interracial Tolerance.

Dr. Yamei Kin, who says a commercial war should be made with commerce and not with human lives.

"WE want you to hear China's side. The United States has always been kind to me, and will not refuse to listen to what I say. We are coming closer to you, really; we have always been closer to you, in our form of government than you know. You ask me whether we are to remain a republic. What does it matter what we call it so long as we have the thing? Yuan Shi-Kai has been made President for ten years, of which only three have passed. He is doing wonderful things for China; it is the reconstruction period and China is busy planting, for we are a nation that feeds itself. So there is no excitement—and the papers, which must talk about something come out every now and then with the question: 'Will he be made Emperor?' In China we smile, because we know it is just talk; but here you take it seriously. Your American idea of advertising convinces you that it makes a difference whether we call ourselves a republic or a monarchy. To us it does not matter, because we have democracy."

She is tiny and gentle and modest, is Dr. Namei Kin, yet she was the first woman of her country to take a medical degree—at the Woman's Medical College of the New York Infirmary for Women and Children—and, after two years post-graduate work she returned to China and received permission to found the first modern hospital there. But there was a condition attached, that all materials and labor employed should be Chinese. This made difficulties at the outset, and they were surmounted only when Dr. Kin herself designed the buildings, drew up the plans for lighting, water supply and plumbing, and personally superintended the actual work of construction. For Dr. Kin, in her simple Chinese costume and her unhurried Oriental manner, is full of American "hustle"—and, by the way, has plenty of frank American humor.

Just now she has come to the United States to tell us what we do not know about modern China, and that is a very great deal.

"But I represent no faction and I hold no brief for the government," says Dr. Kin. "I have come to speak for the people of China. I have come to say: You, the people of the United States, you know that we do not live by fighting. You know that modern war is a war of commerce, not of killing. Fighting never solves any problems; it destroys life and breeds hate, and the problems remain unsolved—for, after all, no matter how much we may kill, the market will go to the best producer in the end.

"We always have had a good deal more democracy than other nations realized. We have no hereditary nobility, for example. A man receives a title when he has done something memorable; but unless his son does something memorable, too, the son's rank is less than the father's, so that a man fifteen generations descended from a reigning prince may be a commoner. And over the door of every school there is written: 'Remember that the prime minister is made, not born.'

"The dynasties, you know, were afraid of despotism because they knew the people would rebel, so they relinquished gradually most of the power of direct government to the heads of provinces, reserving what amounted to little more than the right of absolute veto; for every time there was a change of dynasty the country ran with blood. This time—because we are, like you, a peaceful people—the dynasty resigned; and they said: 'We, retiring because we believe it is the wish of the people that we should retire, delegate to you, our people, the prime minister who has aided us, in order that in turn he may aid you.'

"And that," says Dr. Kin, "was Yuan Shi-Kai. From the start the power was his, for no reason except that he is just and sane and that his motto has been not to involve the helpless common people in bloodshed. Of course, the southern provinces were not loyal. They wanted to rule. But the south should not rule. It is not in history, it is not in nature, that the people of hot countries should rule.

"However, in order to avoid bloodshed, Yuan Shi-Kai arbitrated with them. He was only dissuaded, too, from going to treat with them in person when a plot to murder him resulted in the death of some of his attendants. Even then he was willing to arbitrate, and so he let Sun Yat-Sen become a leader. It was only necessary that Sun Yat-Sen should have enough rope for him to hang himself. He began with his ridiculous plan to duplicate every railroad in existence in China—literally to run other systems parallel to those which we had—instead of building new ones in other directions! And that fell through. And other plans of his fell through, while Yuan Shi-Kai looked on. But when Sun Yat-Sen planned to raise an army of Japanese to conquer the disloyal provinces, at last Yuan Shi-Kai put his foot down. It was the right moment, for people had seen for themselves that he was just no good. And now they say in China: 'Sun Yat-Sen, we have no use for you!'

"But we have a great deal of use for Yuan Shi-Kai. At first the people did not understand him, for he discouraged them when they resented the insults of the Japanese. And they accuse him of suppressing news, of maintaining an arbitrary censorship over the press. It is true that he does this—but it is because he does not wish the newspapers to inflame the people against the Japanese. This is no time for us to go to war with Japan, when all Europe is at war. We must stand alone, we must feed ourselves, we must keep our people alive. Who in Europe would listen to us now? So we say to the people: 'If the Japanese insult you, do not hear! Tend your crops—and buy nothing of Japan. Your time will come!'

"But when our time comes I hope there will not be war," says Dr. Kin. "We Chinese are a peaceful people. We rise only when our wrongs become intolerable.

"Japan says to us that we must join her to make war upon the white race. When they made that proposition to me I told them that the time was past when foreigners could be kept on the other side of the Caucasus. The white race is here on earth to stay. Why waste our energy in fighting them? Why not learn to get along? They have made mistakes, and so have we. The process of evolution is going on in both of us. Why not be tolerant and try to understand how it is going on in them? Individuals learn to live without violence. There is no more duelling among individuals. Why should there be fighting between nations?

"Japan has lied to you and we want you to hear our side. We want you to hear about the treaty she made with us which sounded so liberal to you, but by the terms of which she secured control of the maritime customs, of taxes, of large tracts of land; we want you to know of the soldiers sent by Japan to help the government, who changed their uniforms in broad daylight and went over to the other side when the insurgents seemed successful—and more.

"And when you have heard all this I want to say to the United States: You, too, are a peaceful people. Will you help China to make war in the peaceful Oriental way—to make a war of commerce by making war with commerce and not with human lives?"

French Artists Spur on an American Art

Continued from second page.

He shrugged his shoulders. "That I cannot say. Pioneers must always expect to be misunderstood. It is a matter of great indifference to me what criticism is printed in the papers and the magazines. I am simply working out my own ideas in my own way. Those who do not understand what it is we are attempting to portray simply cannot be shown. I cannot explain my paintings. Either one grasps their purport or one doesn't. To any one admitting an incapacity to understand this art, I say: Study all the paintings of the genre you can. It is only through constant observation that the plan becomes clear."

Monsieur Duchamp expressed himself as delighted with America.

"I adore New York," he said. "There is much about it which is like the Paris of the old days. Many artists have come over, and I think many more will come. As I said, I can paint wherever chance sets me down. I am perfectly emancipated in that regard. But I must admit the atmosphere of Paris just now is not such as to inspire artists."

Among the more noted of this artist's work is a study of chess players and of a king and a queen. These are highly interesting paintings and exemplify some of Duchamp's strongly individual ideals.

"You will observe, in the picture of the chess players," he remarked, "that a very intense absorption in the game is evinced. This is produced by a technique which must be visioned to be understood. The impression of watchers, who form the background, is conveyed in the same manner. With this king and queen," he continued, turning to the other picture, "sex is established by the same method of suggestion. To me the execution of the king is very much more masculine than that of the queen. Motion, you will observe, is supplied by a procession of rapidly moving nudes. Of course, both of these pictures are fruit of an epoch in my life which is past. There is nothing static about my manner of working. I am never deceived myself into thinking that I have at length hit upon the ultimate expression. In the midst of each epoch I fully realize that a new epoch will dawn.

"Regarding the attitude of the public toward my work, and, indeed, to all the work of this genre, I think it is more the execution than the spirit which is misunderstood and not comprehended. At the bottom, we are all working toward the same goal. Mere details of execution do not constitute the real spirit of art. Every artist has his own way of working with the materials at hand. For my part, the fact that my ideals reflect a period of growths proves that the spirit of art may be approached from many angles. Until all have been tried, it is impossible to affirm, with any degree of veracity, that the manner has been achieved. Art is all a matter of personality."

"The Nude Descending the Stair," in the finished state, with which the public is familiar, did not spring into being without intermediate steps. Marcel Duchamp has in his studio a photograph of an earlier treatment of the same theme, which affords an interesting comparison. Ranging the two studies side by side makes very apparent the expenditure of much thought between the conception of the idea in the first place and its ultimate treatment. The latter is much more powerful and moving. Also it is worked out more subtly, expanding, in a number of salient directions, what the earlier study rather hinted than expressed.